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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000345

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: DRC'S NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE TARGETS CORRUPTION,
PROFESSIONALIZATION

REF: A. KINSHASA 306

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 308

[1](#)C. KINSHASA 322

Classified By: Poloff KRBel for reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. New DRC Minister of Defense Chihez Diemu's immediate priorities include combating corruption, dismantling the guard forces maintained by the former transitional vice presidents, and finalizing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (DDR) to streamline and professionalize the armed forces. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador's first official meeting with new Minister of Defense Chihez Diemu on March 8 was cordial and characterized by frank conversation and informality. Diemu acknowledged the huge challenges his country and his ministry face in bringing the DRC's security forces under control. He dismissed his two uniformed military assistants at the beginning of the meeting, and asked that Poloff refrain from taking notes. DATT also participated in the meeting.

[1](#)3. (C) In a frank exchange, Diemu acknowledged the massive challenges required to professionalize the DRC's armed forces. He cited pitfalls and obstacles he expected, noting that there is resistance to change both within and outside the military. He acknowledged ingrained corruption in the military, and called for quick action to establish control. He said he had been recognized as "the son of the house" at the Ministry due to his previous service as advisor to the Minister of Defense under Prime Minister Nguz a Karl-i-Bond. He conceded he did not know whether he would be allowed to change things as he wants.

[1](#)4. (C) Diemu referenced ongoing concern regarding former Vice President Bemba's personal guard forces. The Ambassador underscored the serious risks associated with any renewed effort to forcibly disarm Bemba's troops, or indeed any renewed armed clash. Diemu asserted that there was no imminent plan for such action, but reiterated a familiar appeal that Ambassadors should use their influence with Bemba to accept the terms of last year's decree regarding security for former Vice Presidents. (Comment: An appeal which side-steps the issue of Kabila's apparent reluctance to initiate direct discussions with Bemba's camp on this subject. End comment.) Diemu made reference to an estimate of several hundred Bemba guards, and also mentioned former Vice President Ruberwa's remaining guards, although Ruberwa clearly represented a secondary issue.

[1](#)5. (C) Diemu cited Security Sector Reform (SSR) as a main concern for the GDRC. One of the first priorities, he noted,

was to conduct an accurate census of the military. The most recent attempt to count existing soldiers -- an effort spearheaded by the South Africans -- has reduced the estimated size of the armed forces, but even that count includes thousands of "ghost" soldiers, whose pay is subsequently pocketed by senior commanders. The Ambassador picked up on previous discussions with Diemu to reiterate that significant progress in the security sector is essential for the DRC's future. These include integration and DDR programs, a serious effort to attack corruption, particularly among senior officers, and undertake the reforms necessary to establish adequate salary, support, and logistics capability.

The Ambassador also noted that it would likely be useful to have an opportunity for an exchange with Diemu involving COM's of several of the DRC's principal partners relatively soon after Diemu has had a chance to establish himself in his new position. Diemu welcomed this initiative.

¶6. (C) When the Ambassador outlined ongoing military support programs, Diemu expressed his satisfaction at having such "good friends" as the Americans to turn to for advice and support, and his hope for increased levels of visible cooperation between the DRC and US on SSR. When the Ambassador mentioned an upcoming introductory military justice seminar to be presented through the DAO, Diemu expressed immediate and strong interest. He felt it important to have an opening ceremony at the Ministry of Defense in which he would participate and help underscore his interest and support for military justice. He asked if the schedule could be adjusted to accommodate this, and of course we readily concurred. (Comment: It seemed clear that Diemu though this was an excellent and timely opportunity to begin to establish his administration and agenda with FARDC and MOD personnel. We are happy to oblige, and the ceremony was duly

KINSHASA 00000345 002 OF 002

held with press coverage on March 19. End comment.)

¶7. (C) Comment: Chihez Diemu is a close and longtime Embassy contact, and his appointment as Minister of Defense presents opportunities for cooperation on many levels. He is eager for greater USG involvement. Although a loyal Presidential insider, his willingness to take on problems including corruption and restructuring the military may put him in conflict with other Kabila supporters. End comment.

¶8. (U) Bio notes: Chihez Diemu was born in 1952 in Kapanga, Katanga province. He earned a degree in English language and literature from the University of Zaire in Lubumbashi and taught English for several years. He worked for former Prime Minister Jean Nguz a Karl-I-Bond as personal secretary and advisor to the Minister of Defense in the early 1990s before joining Laurent Kabila's AFDL in 1996. Diemu was appointed a member of Laurent Kabila's parliament, and after Joseph Kabila came to power, he was appointed Vice Minister of the Interior. He was a co-founder of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Development (PPRD) and served as its Secretary-General prior to being named Vice Governor of

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Katanga in charge of economic and finance in 2004. He was elected to the post-transitional National Assembly in 2006. He was named Minister of Defense by Antoine Gizenga in 2007. Chihez Diemu is married and has one son studying engineering in the United States, one daughter currently studying Chinese in China, and one son recently studying English in South Africa.

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